United Nations CRC/C/OMN/CO/3-4

Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Oman*

I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Oman (CRC/C/OMN/3-4) at its 2059th and 2061st meetings (see CRC/C/SR.2059 and 2061), held on 12 and 13 January 2016, and adopted the following concluding observations at its 2104th meeting (see CRC/C/SR.2104), held on 29 January 2016.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined third and fourth periodic reports of the State party, which allows for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party. The Committee also welcomes the written responses to the list of issues (CRC/C/OMN/Q/3-4/Add.1). The Committee expresses appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the high-level and multisectoral delegation of the State party.

II. Follow-up measures taken and progress achieved by the State party

3. The Committee welcomes the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in 2009.

4. The Committee notes with appreciation the adoption of the following legislative measures, among others:

(a) The Child Act, in 2014;

(b) The amendment to the regulations implementing the Civil Status Act, in 2012;

(c) The Cybercrime Act, in 2011;

(d) The Statute regulating the Juvenile Reform Home, in 2010;

(e) The Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act, in 2008;

(f) The Juvenile Accountability Act, in 2008;

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-first session (11-29 January 2016).

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(g) The Trafficking in Persons Act, in 2008;

(h) The Statute of the National Committee for Family Affairs, in 2007.

5. The Committee welcomes the following institutional measures:

(a) Royal Decree No. 18/2014 establishing the Directorate General for the Affairs of Persons with Disabilities;

(b) Ministerial Decision No. 1/2009 establishing the National Committee for the Care of Persons with Disabilities;

(c) Ministerial Decision No. 78/2008 establishing working teams to study and monitor cases of child abuse in the provinces.

III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

The Committee's previous recommendations

6. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to address the recommendations contained in its concluding observations of 2006 (CRC/C/OMN/CO/2) that have not been implemented or have been implemented only partially, in particular those related to non-discrimination (para. 25 of those concluding observations), the right to identity (para. 32), corporal punishment (para. 34), children with disabilities (para. 44), harmful practices (para. 52), children of migrant workers (para. 60), economic exploitation, including child labour (para. 62), sexual exploitation and trafficking (para. 66), and the administration of juvenile justice (para. 68).**

Reservations

7. The Committee welcomes the withdrawal of reservations relating to articles 7, 9, 21 and 30, and of the general reservation with respect to provisions that do not accord with Islamic law and legislation in force in the State party. The Committee is concerned, however, that the State party maintains a reservation with respect to article 14, notwithstanding the modification of that reservation. The Committee is also concerned about a general reservation stating that the provisions of the Convention should be applied within the limits imposed by the material resources available.

8. **The Committee encourages the State party to consider withdrawing its remaining reservations to the Convention.**

Legislation

9. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Child Act of 2014, and the ongoing legal reform, which has contributed to the improvement of children's rights in the State party. However, the Committee is concerned that the Child Act does not fully address all areas relevant to the Convention, including the family environment, alternative care, and the administration of juvenile justice.

10. **The Committee urges the State party to continue to strengthen its efforts to develop consistent legislative frameworks in all areas affecting children's rights in compliance with the Convention, in particular with respect to the Child Act of 2014 and its effective implementation.**

Comprehensive policy and strategy

11. The Committee welcomes the information provided by the State party that the National Strategy for Children has been adopted and is in the process of being implemented. However, the Committee is concerned that the National Strategy does not fully address all areas relevant to the Convention.

12. **The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to ensure the full implementation of the National Strategy for Children that include specific time-bound and measurable goals and targets to effectively monitor and evaluate progress in the implementation of children's rights throughout the State party.**

Coordination

13. The Committee welcomes the reform of the National Committee for Family Affairs, which expands its membership to include all relevant government bodies and non-governmental organizations concerned with families and women's and children's issues. The Committee also welcomes the establishment of a follow-up committee on the rights of the child. However, the Committee is concerned that the National Committee does not have the necessary staff and resources to effectively discharge its mandate, which includes coordination among relevant government bodies and non-governmental organizations. It is also concerned that the Child Act does not contain provisions regarding the coordination of action for its effective implementation among the ministries concerned and with other governmental bodies and institutions.

14. **The Committee recommends that the State party further enhance the role and capacity of the National Committee for Family Affairs, as previously recommended (CRC/C/OMN/CO/2, para. 15), by providing it with the human, technical and financial resources needed, to give it a mandate to effectively implement and coordinate comprehensive, coherent and consistent policies to promote the rights of the child at all levels, and to assess the impact of such policies and programmes on children's rights. It also recommends that multisectoral coordination between bodies and institutions be strengthened so as to effectively implement the Convention and the Child Act at all levels.**

Allocation of resources

15. The Committee welcomes the information on the programme of cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to incorporate into the development plans of the State party a budget that is friendly to children's rights and budget allocations for education. However, the Committee is concerned about the lack of data on the proportion of the national budget allocated to the implementation of children's rights under the Convention and on follow-up mechanisms for full implementation.

16. **In the light of its general discussion entitled "Resources for the rights of the child – responsibility of States", held in 2007, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Establish a budgeting process that includes a child-rights perspective and specifies clear allocations to children in the relevant sectors and agencies, and includes specific indicators and a tracking system;**

(b) **Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the adequacy, efficacy, and equitability of the distribution of resources allocated to the implementation of the Convention;**

(c) **Provide disaggregated information on the proportion of the national budget allocated to the implementation of the rights of the child at the national and local levels.**

Data collection

17. The Committee notes that the National Centre for Statistics and Information is responsible for collecting and disseminating national statistics in all areas to facilitate development planning. It welcomes the information that the Ministry for Social Development has established a database of social indicators that includes data on children, and that the Ministry has held several training courses on analytical statistical reporting. However, the Committee is concerned about the lack of data on children with disabilities, on abuse and neglect, on juvenile justice, on child labour and exploitation, on the use of harmful substances and on adolescent health.

18. **In the light of its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party continue to improve its data-collection system. The data collected should cover all areas of the Convention and be disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographic location, ethnic origin and socioeconomic background in order to facilitate the analysis of the situation of all children, particularly those in situations of vulnerability. The Committee also recommends that the data and indicators be shared among the ministries concerned and used for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the effective implementation of the Convention. In this context, the Committee additionally recommends that the State party take into account the conceptual and methodological framework set out in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) entitled *Human rights indicators: a guide to measurement and implementation* when defining, collecting and disseminating statistical information, and that it strengthen its technical cooperation with UNICEF.**

Independent monitoring

19. The Committee welcomes the establishment by the State party, in 2008, of the National Human Rights Commission, which is responsible for monitoring the protection of human rights in the State party. However, the Committee is concerned about the independence of that Commission, the lack of a clear mandate, and the fact that no special unit for children has been established within it.

20. **In the light of its general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent national human rights institutions, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take further measures to ensure the full independence of the National Human Rights Commission, including with regard to its funding, mandate and immunities, so that the State party is fully compliant with the Paris Principles;**

(b) **Ensure that the National Human Rights Commission is able to receive complaints from children and investigate and address those complaints in a child-sensitive manner, that it is able to ensure the privacy and protection of child victims, and that it can undertake monitoring, follow-up and verification activities in the interests of the victims;**

(c) **Seek technical cooperation from, among others, OHCHR, UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme.**

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

21. The Committee welcomes the efforts of the State party to promote the Convention and disseminate information on the rights of the child among the general public, including children, through various forums, festivals, workshops, publications and the media. It also welcomes the numerous training initiatives undertaken by the State party on the Convention

and its Optional Protocols. However, the Committee is still concerned that professionals working with children, parents and the public at large are not always sufficiently aware of the Convention and its Optional Protocols.

22. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to systematically disseminate information about the Convention and its Optional Protocols among children, their parents and other caregivers, and all relevant professional groups working with and for children. The Committee also recommends that the State party continue its cooperation with UNICEF regarding the Convention and its Optional Protocols in the areas of dissemination, awareness-raising and training.**

Cooperation with civil society

23. While taking note of the information in the report concerning efforts by the State party to collaborate with civil society actors in all matters relating to the Convention and in the formulation of public policy, the Committee is, nonetheless, deeply concerned about information regarding the arbitrary detention and harassment of civil society activists.

24. **The Committee urges the State party to take immediate action to allow human rights defenders and all civil society actors working in the area of children's rights to carry out their activities without threats or harassment by security forces. The Committee also recommends that the State party systematically involve all civil society actors working in the field of children's rights in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of laws, policies and programmes related to children.**

B. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

Non-discrimination

25. The Committee welcomes the information concerning measures to ensure that the birth of a child out of wedlock is registered and that the child is provided with a four-part name and attached to a particular tribe. The Committee also notes the efforts of the State party to ensure that children with disabilities are protected from discriminatory treatment, including through the promulgation of the Care and Rehabilitation of the Disabled Act. However, the Committee remains concerned that both de jure and de facto discrimination of girls, children born out of wedlock, children with disabilities and children of migrant workers, especially with respect to access to social and health services and equal education opportunities, continues to be problematic in the State party.

26. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all children enjoy equal rights under the Convention without discrimination, either de jure or de facto. The Committee also recommends that the State party intensify efforts to ensure the effective elimination of any form of discrimination against those and other groups of children in marginalized situations and that it do so through, among other things, awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, and education, especially in schools and at the community level. The Committee further recommends that the State party review national legislation to ensure that it is fully in line with the Convention, in particular with respect to children born out of wedlock and children of migrant workers in both regular and irregular situations.**

Best interests of the child

27. The Committee welcomes the information in the report that the principle of the best interests of the child is enshrined in various pieces of legislation, including the Child Act,

and is applied in the areas of child support, custody, family care and fostering, education and juvenile justice. However, the Committee is concerned about the insufficient information regarding the State party's efforts to ensure the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration in all actions, and regarding the State party's efforts to apply that right in all legislation, administrative and judicial proceedings, policies and programmes relating to children.

28. **In the light of its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to ensure that that right is appropriately integrated into all legislation and consistently interpreted and applied in all administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions, as well as in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children. In that regard, the State party is encouraged to develop procedures and criteria to provide guidance to all relevant persons in positions of authority for determining the best interests of the child in every area and for giving it due weight as a primary consideration.**

Right to life, survival and development

29. The Committee welcomes the information about the decrease in the number of children involved in road accidents and about efforts aimed at their prevention. However, the Committee is concerned that the number of children injured and killed in car accidents remains high.

30. **The Committee recommends that the State party;**

(a) **Adopt and implement the draft national plan to prevent accidents;**

(b) **Enforce child safety measures;**

(c) **Impose sanctions for transporting children without safety belts or restraints;**

(d) **Strengthen the enforcement of laws with respect to driving licences and impose appropriate sanctions for driving without a licence and underage driving;**

(e) **Carry out awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, to reduce the number of road accidents.**

Respect for the views of the child

31. The Committee notes the State party's efforts to ensure respect for the views of the child in the Civil Status Act and the Child Act, as well as in educational activities and programmes, student administrative councils and class committees. It also notes that the Ministry of Social Development organizes annual and periodic children's forums on the Convention and related issues. However, the Committee is concerned that traditional and cultural practices do not readily accommodate and recognize the views of the child at home, at school and in the community, and that, in practice, the views of the child are not adequately respected in all relevant areas at the national and local levels.

32. **In light of its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Take measures to ensure the effective implementation of legislation recognizing the right of the child to be heard in relevant legal proceedings, including by establishing systems and/or procedures for social workers and courts to comply with this principle;**

(b) Conduct research to identify the issues that are most important to children, hear their views on those issues, find out how well their voices are being heard in family decisions affecting their lives, and identify the channels through which they can have the most influence on national and local decision-making;

(c) Develop toolkits to standardize public consultation on national policy development in a manner ensuring that the level of inclusiveness and participation is high and that children are consulted on issues that affect them;

(d) Conduct programmes and awareness-raising activities to promote cultural change and the meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, in the community and at school, including within student council bodies, with particular attention paid to girls and children in vulnerable situations;

(e) Establish and institutionalize a children's parliament as a regular event and ensure that it is provided with a meaningful mandate and adequate human, technical and financial resources, in order to facilitate children's effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them.

C. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, and 13-17)

Birth registration, name and nationality

33. The Committee welcomes the withdrawal of the reservation concerning article 7 of the Convention with respect to the right of a child to acquire a nationality, as well as information to ensure proper registration of all births in the State party. However, the Committee is concerned that the Law on Citizenship of 2014 places numerous conditions on an Omani mother married to a foreigner who wishes to pass her citizenship on to her children, a situation that could result in significant violations of her children's rights. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of information concerning registration of the births of children born to migrant workers in the State party.

34. **The Committee recommends that the State party amend its laws to grant Omani women equal rights to Omani men with regard to the transmission of their nationality to their children and that it provide adequate safeguards to ensure the conferral of citizenship on children who would otherwise be stateless. It also recommends that the State party strengthen efforts to ensure that all births in the State party are registered, including, in cooperation with the States concerned, those of children of migrant workers, and that it provide statistics so that this issue can be assessed in the next periodic report. It further recommends that the State party become party to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.**

D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39)

Corporal punishment

35. The Committee welcomes the information that the Child Act prohibits any form of violence against children by any person, and that penal legislation has been enacted to address violence against children. It also welcomes the awareness-raising initiatives of the Ministry of Education on positive methods to deal with student behaviour issues. However, the Committee is concerned that corporal punishment is not explicitly prohibited in the Child Act and is widely accepted in society as a way to discipline children in the home, in schools and in residential institutions.

36. **In line with its general comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment, and with its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Amend the Child Act to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, repeal article 38 (2) of the Penal Code, which authorizes punishment within the limits of established customs, and implement policies to ensure that corporal punishment is prohibited in all settings, including in the family, in schools and in institutions;**

(b) **Promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment, and expand parenting education programmes and training for principals, teachers, and other professionals working with and for children;**

(c) **Strengthen and expand its efforts to inform the general public, through awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, about the negative impact of corporal punishment on children, and actively involve children and the media in the process.**

Abuse and neglect

37. The Committee commends the numerous initiatives taken by the State party, notably the establishment of the Family Protection Department, of child protection committees, of care centres and of a child protection hotline. It also welcomes the establishment of mechanisms for the mandatory reporting by physicians, teachers and other professionals of cases of abuse and neglect, pursuant to article 63 of the Child Care Act. It further welcomes the development of training materials and courses for teachers, health-care workers and law enforcement personnel. However, the Committee is concerned about the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in the State party and of punishment for behaviour deemed immoral. The Committee is also concerned about the fact that law enforcement personnel are given insufficient training to work with child victims of abuse and violence, and that there is a lack of information on investigations, follow-up, recovery and social reintegration.

38. **In the light of its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence and taking note of target 2 of Sustainable Development Goal 16 to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Further strengthen awareness-raising and education programmes, including campaigns, with the involvement of children, in order to formulate a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combatting child abuse in all settings, including implementing the necessary legislation and policies;**

(b) **Establish an easily accessible mechanism through which children and others can report cases of abuse and neglect, that offers victims the necessary protection and that ensures that the perpetrators are investigated, prosecuted and punished;**

(c) **Facilitate the physical and psychological rehabilitation of child victims and ensure that they have access to health services, including mental health services;**

(d) **Ensure that all professionals and staff working with and for children are provided with the necessary training on ways to prevent and monitor child abuse and neglect, and that they receive, investigate and prosecute complaints about such violence in a child and gender-sensitive manner;**

(e) Ensure the allocation of adequate human, technical and financial resources to the Family Protection Department to enable it to implement long-term programmes for addressing the root causes of violence and abuse;

(f) Encourage community-based programmes aimed at preventing and addressing domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, including by involving former victims, volunteers and community members, and provide training and support to them;

(g) Provide information on investigations, follow-up, recovery and social reintegration in the next periodic report.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

39. The Committee is concerned about the lack of information regarding sexual exploitation and abuse of children, on the number of cases brought before the courts and their outcomes, and on the availability of treatment, including mental health counselling, support and reintegration for children victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.

40. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Establish mechanisms, procedures and guidelines to ensure mandatory reporting and speedy and effective investigation and prosecution of cases of sexual abuse and exploitation of children;

(b) Amend legislation to ensure that all children subjected to sexual exploitation in whatever form are treated as victims and are not subject to criminal sanctions;

(c) Conduct awareness-raising and education programmes to combat the stigmatization of child victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, and ensure accessible, confidential, child-friendly and effective channels for reporting cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of children;

(d) Ensure the development of programmes and policies for the prevention, recovery and social reintegration of child victims in accordance with the outcome documents adopted at the world congresses against commercial sexual exploitation of children.

Harmful practices

41. The Committee welcomes the prohibition of harmful traditional practices and the sanctions for those promoting or assisting in such practices, in accordance with article 20 of the Child Act. The Committee also takes note of the information that the State party intends to enact regulations on female genital mutilation under the Child Act . The Committee welcomes the information that the minimum age for marriage is legally set at 18 for both boys and girls, that early marriage has been diminishing overall and that the average age for marriage has been increasing. Nevertheless the Committee is concerned that female genital mutilation and child marriages continue to occur in some remote areas.

42. **In the light of the joint general recommendation No. 31 (2014) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/ general comment No. 18 (2014) of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) Undertake a national study of the prevalence of harmful practices in the State party, continue to take measures to eliminate all harmful practices in the State party, including female genital mutilation, and enforce the legal minimum age of marriage set at 18 years, particularly in remote areas;

(b) **Adopt and implement the draft regulations on female genital mutilation under the Child Act, impose sanctions, adapted to the specificities of female genital mutilation, especially its social and professional aspects, on those who engage in them, enforce those sanctions, and develop a plan of action and undertake efforts to eliminate female genital mutilation through awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns;**

(c) **Undertake comprehensive awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, on the negative consequences of child marriage for girls, targeting in particular parents, teachers and community leaders;**

(d) **Establish appropriate redress mechanisms accessible to all girls and women who are victims of harmful practices, and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and adequately punished;**

(e) **Strengthen support measures, such as shelters, counselling and rehabilitation services, aimed at victims of harmful practices against children, especially girls, and provide gender-sensitive and violence-focused training for the judiciary, for law enforcement officers and for health professionals.**

E. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9-11, 18 (1) and (2), 20, 21, 25 and 27 (4))

Family environment

43. The Committee welcomes the information on the many programmes aimed at providing guidance for parents and other caregivers on their child-rearing responsibilities and on child development. However, the Committee is concerned about unequal parenting responsibilities and about the fact that insufficient measures have been taken to change the prevalent gender stereotypes concerning the tasks and roles of women, especially in the family, and to address discriminatory laws relating to marriage, polygamy, divorce, property, inheritance, nationality, guardianship and custodial rights.

44. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt policies and measures for changing mind-sets and stereotypes regarding the roles of parents so as to encourage equal sharing of parental responsibilities towards children in the family;**

(b) **Consider introducing a reform of the Civil Status Act and other relevant legislation, specifically with respect to marriage, divorce, property, inheritance, nationality, guardianship and custodial rights, to ensure that men and women, and boys and girls, have equal rights and responsibilities;**

(c) **Abolish all provisions that discriminate against women and have a negative impact on their children, such as those that allow polygamy and repudiation;**

(d) **Consider acceding to the Hague Convention of 23 November 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, the Protocol on the law applicable to maintenance obligations of 23 November 2007, and the Hague Convention of 19 October 1996 on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children.**

Children deprived of a family environment

45. The Committee commends the State party for the improvements it has made to its child protection system, which include legislative reforms, and welcomes the promulgation of the Statute regulating Family Care and Fostering, and the provision of integrated services by the Childhood Care Centre. It also welcomes the establishment of the Family Protection Centre and the Al Wifaq Centre, the creation of a database for monitoring children placed in foster care and the provision of counselling services by the Department of Family Guidance to assist children in adapting to a foster family. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The continued institutionalization of abandoned children, mostly children born out of wedlock;

(b) The insufficient assistance given to children who age out of the foster care system;

(c) The insufficient information concerning government oversight of the placement of children and concerning quality monitoring in respect of care given in foster families and residential care facilities.

46. **Drawing the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Support and facilitate family-based care for children wherever possible, including for children in single-parent families, and strengthen the system of foster care for children who cannot stay with their families, with a view to reducing the institutionalization of children;**

(b) **Ensure adequate safeguards and clear criteria, based on the needs and best interests of the child, for determining whether a child should be placed in alternative care;**

(c) **Ensure periodic reviews of the placement of children in foster care and institutions, and monitor the quality of the care given, including by providing accessible channels for reporting, monitoring and remedying the maltreatment of children;**

(d) **Ensure that adequate human, technical and financial resources are allocated to alternative care centres and relevant child protection services in order to facilitate the rehabilitation and social reintegration of resident children to the greatest extent possible;**

(e) **Provide aftercare support for children ageing out of the alternative care system.**

F. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (1-3) and 33)

Children with disabilities

47. The Committee notes that the State party is developing a strategy on children with disabilities, which includes a database. It welcomes the information that the State party has established the National Committee for the Care of Persons with Disabilities and has given it a mandate to coordinate and strengthen programmes for the prevention of all types of disability and to provide training programmes for the rehabilitation and inclusion of persons with disabilities, including children, into society. It also welcomes the information that the

State party has implemented a number of programmes to promote, in each governorate, the access of children with disabilities to health, education and social services, including rehabilitation programmes, family support and other initiatives. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The fact that the necessary national strategy on persons with disabilities has not yet been adopted;

(b) The low number of children with disabilities enrolled in schools, and the high illiteracy rate among children with disabilities;

(c) The insufficient mainstreaming of children with disabilities in the regular school environment, insufficient accessibility, and inadequate budgetary allocations for these purposes;

(d) The lack of adequate schools, residential facilities and care and rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities, especially in rural areas;

(e) Teaching methodologies that are inadequate for allowing children with disabilities to reach their full potential, inadequate training for teachers regarding inclusive education, and the insufficient number of teachers trained in special education and of personnel for rehabilitation services;

(f) The fact that children with disabilities are subjected to discrimination, neglect and abuse, and are not effectively integrated into all areas of social life.

48. **In the light of its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee urges the State party to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability and set up a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities, and in particular to:**

(a) **Continue to strengthen the legislative and policy framework and strengthen efforts to coordinate laws and policies for the promotion and protection of the rights of children with disabilities at the national level, including the adoption and implementation of a national plan for the care of children with disabilities;**

(b) **Ensure that schools are accessible and adequately staffed and funded, that children with disabilities are treated with dignity and respect and that they benefit from effective school inclusion programmes;**

(c) **Increase the number of schools, residential facilities and care and rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities, especially in rural areas;**

(d) **Ensure that continuing training is provided for professionals working with children with disabilities, such as teachers, social workers and health, medical, therapeutic and care personnel, that guidelines and training materials are developed, and that monitoring mechanisms are in place regarding the performance of care providers;**

(e) **Undertake sustained public awareness campaigns aimed at government officials, the public and families to combat the stigmatization of and prejudice against children with disabilities and to promote a positive image of such children;**

(f) **Take all measures necessary to ensure that children with disabilities are fully integrated into all areas of social life, including education, sports and leisure activities, and that facilities and other public areas are accessible to children with disabilities.**

Health and health services

49. The Committee commends the State party for its significant improvements in health infrastructure and services, including universal immunization coverage, and for its efforts to improve comprehensive health services to children. The Committee also commends the reduction in infant mortality rates, child mortality under the age of five, malnutrition-related diseases and iodine deficiency disorders. The Committee further commends the awareness-raising campaigns to promote sound nutritional practices and healthy living. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) Diarrhoea and underweight prevalence among children under five years old, which is still problematic in certain parts of the country, and stunting, wasting and anaemia, which are still a concern, although there are marked regional disparities outside of the capital;

(b) The prevalence of low birth weight, which is tied to poor nutritional practices by mothers, and the high number of mothers with anaemia, which is tied to poor birth spacing;

(c) The high level of congenital malformations;

(d) The low level of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and the suboptimal infant and young child feeding practices.

50. **The Committee, in light of its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24), recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Continue to strengthen efforts to make available adequate financial and human resources to the health sector in order to ensure the quality of the services for all children across the board, including children living in remote areas of the State party;**

(b) **Strengthen measures to address the causes of diarrhoea, including the implementation of a rotavirus vaccination programme;**

(c) **Continue targeted interventions to prevent anaemia and the stunting, wasting and undernourishment of children, including the promotion of proper infant and young child feeding practices, continue to raise awareness of nutrition issues, and promote overall nutrition education in all parts of the State party;**

(d) **Continue to improve maternal care, including by ensuring the quality of the services, and raise awareness among women of the importance of antenatal, perinatal and post-partum care, of sound nutritional practices for pregnant women, including taking iron and folic acid supplements during pregnancy to prevent and treat anaemia, and of optimal birth spacing to protect the health of mothers and children;**

(e) **Increase genetic testing and health screening of couples for the prevention and early detection of congenital disabilities, and raise awareness of the health consequences of consanguineous marriages for the children born from them;**

(f) **Strengthen measures to improve the practice of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, and intensify efforts to improve healthy nutritional practices through awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, and the provision of information and training to parents and relevant officials, particularly staff working in maternity units;**

(g) **Step up monitoring and enforcement of the legislative framework regulating the marketing of breast-milk substitutes.**

Mental health

51. The Committee is concerned about the insufficient attention paid to mental health care for children, the oversight mechanisms to protect children in mental health facilities, the inadequate number of outpatient facilities for children, and the insufficient training for primary care staff.

52. **The Committee, referring to its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (art. 24), recommends that the State party strengthen the quality of available services and programmes of mental health for children and, in particular:**

(a) **Take measures to ensure an adequate number of specialists in children's mental health and ensure adequate facilities and outpatient services for psychosocial rehabilitation;**

(b) **Ensure training of all professionals working with children to identify and address mental health problems, in particular in children's homes, places of safety and juvenile correction centres;**

(c) **Provide detailed information on policies, programmes, facilities and awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, relating to mental health for children, in the next periodic report.**

Adolescent health

53. The Committee welcomes the various initiatives undertaken by the State party, including the introduction of a national strategy for school health and of health-promoting school initiatives in 109 schools in all governorates. The Committee also welcomes the establishment of a specialized department to combat narcotics and psychotropic substances, and further welcomes the implementation of a national strategy on drug prevention. The Committee commends the State party for the marked decrease in the number of girls giving birth. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The limited knowledge about reproductive health, and the social and cultural barriers that prevent young people and adolescents from seeking reproductive health information and services, which leads, in particular, to teenage pregnancies;

(b) The insufficient awareness of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS;

(c) The prevalence of iron-deficiency anaemia, in particular among girls;

(d) The high level of tobacco use and the increase in alcohol and drug use among adolescents, in particular girls.

54. **In the light of its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Develop awareness-raising campaigns and sensitization programmes targeting households, local authorities, religious leaders and judges, on the harmful effects of early pregnancy on the physical and mental health and well-being of girls and their babies, and undertake a study of child marriage in the State party with a view to assessing the scope of the phenomenon and ways to address it;**

(b) **Promote age-appropriate sexual education and family planning targeted at adolescents and the wider community, and make programmes on drug and substance abuse and on the prevention of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, part of the compulsory school curriculum;**

(c) **Strengthen programmes to control iron-deficiency anaemia, including by providing iron tablet supplements and fortifying common foods with iron, and continue to expand health-promoting school initiatives to all schools in the State party;**

(d) **Strengthen the enforcement of laws prohibiting the sale of tobacco to children, establish support programmes and services to address substance abuse, and set up intervention programmes and awareness-raising campaigns whose scope includes the stigma associated with treatment for substance addiction, especially for girls.**

Standard of living

55. The Committee takes note of the information provided during the dialogue with the State party on programmes to assist families in need, and notes the fact that the State party has made great progress in reducing extreme poverty. However, the Committee is concerned that some families in situations of poverty still face food insecurity and lack appropriate assistance.

56. **The Committee recommends that the State party intensify efforts to provide appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in situations of poverty, including by strengthening the system of family benefits, child allowances and other services.**

G. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28- 31)

Education, including vocational training and guidance

57. The Committee commends the State party for the rapid expansion of the national education programme, the increase in the number of schools in the State party, the improvements in the enrolment rates at all levels, especially for girls, and literacy rates overall. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The fact that access to education for children in situations of vulnerability remains limited;

(b) The number of children dropping out of school, including at the primary level, despite various support measures designed to promote regular attendance;

(c) The low level of integrated early childhood care and education, specifically for children up to three years old.

58. **In the light of its general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Continue to improve accessibility and the quality of education for all children, and provide quality training for teachers, with a particular emphasis on girls, minority children, children of nomadic peoples, children living in rural areas, children in situations of poverty and children of migrant workers;**

(b) **Strengthen efforts to reduce the premature dropout rate, including by addressing the reasons behind the non-completion of schooling, and develop and promote quality vocational training to enhance the skills of children, especially those who drop out of school;**

(c) **Allocate sufficient financial resources to the development and expansion of early childhood education, based on a comprehensive and holistic policy of early childhood care and education services.**

H. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 (b)–(d), 38, 39 and 40)

Children in situations of migration

59. The Committee is concerned that no explicit policies appear to be in place regarding the provision of education, health and other social services to children who are not nationals of the State party, including children of both documented and undocumented migrant workers and of refugees. The Committee is also concerned about the identification and protection of refugees and the insufficient availability of information on the subject.

60. **The Committee recommends that the State party establish policies for the provision of education, health and other social services to all children present in the State party, including children of documented and undocumented migrant workers and refugees. It also recommends that the State party become party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, enact national legislation on asylum that is in line with international standards, and provide safeguards against refoulement that incorporate the principle of the best interests of the child, with a view to ensuring the protection of refugee and asylum-seeking children. The Committee further recommends that the State party strengthen coordination with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and with governmental institutions to ensure the provision of assistance and protection to refugee, asylum-seeking and stateless children in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.**

Economic exploitation, including child labour

61. The Committee welcomes the information that the State party has taken measures to address the economic exploitation of children. However, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The lack of data on the prevalence of child labour in the State party, including the number of children forced to beg and the number of children involved in domestic service, street and market vending, agriculture and fishing;

(b) The lack of a comprehensive definition of the worst forms of child labour;

(c) The lack of information on occupations deemed to be detrimental to the health, safety or morals of children, and the inadequate regulation in this area;

(d) Children working in family businesses, and the absence of a legal minimum age in this regard.

62. **The Committee urges the State party to ensure that all children are protected against economic exploitation and that the prohibition of the employment of children below the age of 15 applies to every child, including migrants and children of migrants, without exception. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Finalize the study on the phenomenon of child labour in the State party, including its root causes, with a view to establishing a coordinating mechanism to combat child labour;**

(b) **Take measures to prevent children from being economically exploited, by adopting legislation and policies to address child labour in both the formal and informal sectors, including in family businesses;**

(c) **Finalize the list of occupations deemed to be detrimental to the health, safety or morals of children younger than 18, ban children younger than 18 from such occupations, enact legislation and establish enforcement mechanisms;**

(d) **Take appropriate measures to address the problem of children begging in the streets, including prosecution of parents, guardians or caregivers who coerce or force their children to engage in street begging;**

(e) **Continue to raise awareness of the negative consequences of child labour through public educational programmes, including campaigns organized in cooperation with opinion leaders, families and the media, such as those to commemorate World Day against Child Labour;**

(f) **Seek technical assistance from the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Organization.**

Sale, trafficking and abduction

63. Noting that the State party is a transit and destination country for the trafficking in persons, including children, the Committee is concerned about reports that boys are still being used as camel jockeys, and that girls are forced into prostitution and domestic servitude in the State party. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of data on trafficking in persons in the State party and of research on the prevalence of national and cross-border trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography. The Committee is further concerned about the lack of information campaigns aimed at all segments of society, in particular border and law enforcement officials, on means to prevent trafficking and protect oneself and others against it.

64. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen implementation of the Trafficking in Persons Act and of capacity-building initiatives aimed at improving the response of law enforcement officials to cases of trafficking in persons;**

(b) **Establish a monitoring mechanism for the investigation of and redress for trafficking in persons with a view to improving accountability, transparency and the prevention of violations, and ensure the effective prosecution and punishment of those who exploit children for purposes of prostitution and forced labour;**

(c) **Establish procedures for identifying victims of trafficking in persons among all vulnerable populations, including migrant workers, and ensure that the victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons are not punished for acts committed as a direct result of being trafficked, such as immigration violations or prostitution;**

(d) **Continue to implement appropriate policies and programmes for the prevention, recovery and social reintegration of child victims, ensuring that education and training, as well as counselling, health care and other social services, are provided to them in accordance with the outcome documents adopted at the world congresses against commercial sexual exploitation of children;**

(e) **Continue training government officials to recognize and respond appropriately to crimes related to the trafficking in persons, expand public awareness programmes, including campaigns, that promote the identification of possible victims and perpetrators, and raise awareness of preventative measures and avenues for assistance and redress, including, within the tourism industry, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism of the World Tourism Organization.**

Administration of juvenile justice

65. While taking note of the information provided by the State party that it intends to raise the age of criminal responsibility, the Committee remains concerned that the minimum age of criminal responsibility is set at nine years, which is well below internationally acceptable standards. The Committee is also concerned about:

(a) The information that children have been imprisoned for begging and are held together with adults, as well as the lack of information on prison conditions in the State party;

(b) The insufficient information on personnel with specialized training in juvenile justice, including lawyers, judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and correctional officers;

(c) The insufficient information on legal assistance provided to children in conflict with the law, diversion programmes, alternatives to detention such as community service, and probation.

66. **In line with its general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, the Committee urges the State party to bring its juvenile justice system into line with the Convention, and, in particular, it recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Raise the age of criminal responsibility as a matter of priority to internationally acceptable standards, and ensure that all children, by definition persons under 18 years of age, are protected by the juvenile justice system;**

(b) **Adopt a holistic and preventative approach to addressing the problem of children in conflict with the law and the underlying social factors, with a view to supporting children at risk at an early stage, including by expanding intervention programmes, vocational training and other outreach activities;**

(c) **Promote, wherever possible, restorative justice and alternative measures to detention, such as diversion, probation, mediation, counselling, or community service, taking into consideration gender-differentiated programmes for boys and girls in conflict with the law, and ensure that detention is used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time, and that it is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to withdrawing it;**

(d) **In cases where detention is unavoidable, ensure that adequate facilities exist for children in conflict with the law, and that their conditions of detention are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services;**

(e) **Provide effective rehabilitation services, including access to mental health counselling and substance abuse treatment, as well as effective social skills development and education, including vocational training programmes;**

(f) **Enhance the skills and specialization of all relevant actors in the juvenile justice system, including law enforcement personnel, lawyers, judges and social workers, strengthen the judiciary, and enhance training materials;**

(g) **Make use of the technical assistance tools developed by the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice and its members, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNICEF, OHCHR and non-governmental organizations, and seek technical assistance in the area of juvenile justice from members of the Panel.**

Follow-up to the Committee's previous concluding observations and recommendations on the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

67. The Committee takes note with appreciation of the information provided by the State party referring to article 56 of the Child Act and other legislation that contains a number of offences referred to in the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. However, the Committee remains concerned that not all offences covered by the provisions of the Optional Protocol have been fully incorporated into the Penal Code, notably in the context of the sale of children as defined in article 2 of the Optional Protocol, the engagement of a child in forced labour as referred to in article 3, and improperly inducing consent, as an intermediary, for the adoption of a child in violation of applicable international legal instruments on adoption as referred to in article 3 of the Optional Protocol.

68. **The Committee urges the State party to take all appropriate measures to ensure full implementation of the recommendations contained in its concluding observations of 2009 (CRC/C/OPSC/OMN/CO/1) and, in particular, to review the Penal Code and make it fully compatible with articles 2 and 3 of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.**

Follow-up to the Committee's previous concluding observations and recommendations on the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

69. The Committee welcomes the information that the Child Act prohibits the recruitment of children into the armed forces or armed groups, or their direct engagement in any hostilities, and that the Act includes sanctions in this regard. However, the Committee is concerned about article 55 of the Child Act, which permits children from the age of 16 to voluntarily join the national armed forces, as this appears to be contrary to the international legal obligations of the State party under the Optional Protocol and the binding declaration deposited upon ratification of the Optional Protocol, which sets forth that the minimum age at which the State party will permit voluntary recruitment into its national armed forces is 18 years.

70. **The Committee urges the State party to take all appropriate measures to ensure full implementation of the recommendations contained in its concluding observations of 2009, and especially urges it to raise the age of voluntary recruitment into the national armed forces to 18 years. The Committee also recommends that the State party speed up the revision of the Penal Code to ensure conformity with all obligations under the Optional Protocol.**

I. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure

71. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.**

J. Ratification of international human rights instruments

72. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman**

or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families; and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. The Committee also recommends that the State party ratify the optional protocols to the core human rights treaties deposited with the Secretary-General of the United Nations to which it is not yet a party.

K. Cooperation with regional and international bodies

73. **The Committee recommends that the State party cooperate, among others, with the League of Arab States and the Organization of the Islamic Conference.**

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

74. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations are fully implemented. The Committee also recommends that the combined third and fourth periodic report, the written replies to the list of issues of the State party and the present concluding observations be made widely available in the languages of the country.**

B. Next report

75. **The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined fifth to eighth periodic reports by 7 January 2022 and to include therein information on the follow-up to the present concluding observations. The report should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines adopted on 31 January 2014 (CRC/C/58/Rev.3) and should not exceed 21,200 words (see General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16). In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation thereof for the purpose of consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.**

76. **The Committee also invites the State party to submit an updated core document, not exceeding 42,400 words, in accordance with the requirements for the common core document in the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific document (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I) and General Assembly resolution 68/268 (para. 16).**